



WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.

FIRING LINE

Guest: David W. Belin, attorney, author

Subject: "THE PRESIDENTIAL ASSASSINATION"

SOUTHERN EDUCATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS ASSOCIATION

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SICA PRESENTS



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Panelists: Robert Kuttner, Senate Banking Committee
Martha Angle, *Washington Star*
Frank Donatelli, Young Americans for
Freedom

FIRING LINE is produced and directed by WARREN STEIBEL

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MR. BUCKLEY: Two-thirds of the American people believe that John F. Kennedy was killed not by Lee Harvey Oswald acting alone, or even by Oswald at all, but by the action of conspirators. Here there are schools of thought: There are those who believe the Soviet Union was the murderous intelligence behind it all; others who believe Fidel Castro planned it; still others who have Texas zealots in mind; then there is the Mafia. Inventive minds put together a combination of any two of these elements, my personal favorite being a combination of Russian Communists and Texan millionaires.

Mencken is famous for saying that nobody ever lost money overestimating the gullibility of the American people. And it is very clear that a lot of people have made money playing on that gullibility. That, at least, is the contention of Mr. David Belin, and he ought to know. He is from the Middle West, went through the University of Michigan as a sort of whiz kid, winning all the prizes, beating all the records. He served in the Army and went into private practice in Des Moines, where he still practices, from which, however, in due course he was fingered to act as a counsel to the Warren Commission to investigate the assassination of President Kennedy. He is substantially responsible for the Warren Report, along with his colleague Joseph Ball.

When the Rockefeller Commission was convened to investigate the Central Intelligence Agency last year, he was appointed the staff director, and he found himself in a way looking over the CIA at the Warren Commission; that is to say, looking into a mirror.

Meanwhile, in 1973 he produced, belatedly, a large, best-selling book that coped with all the major criticisms that up until then had lodged in the public mind in criticism of the Warren Report. It is called *November 22, 1963: You Are the Jury*. It was almost universally greeted as a document of unassailable persuasiveness. But since then, of course, there have been two events of major psychological impact, as everyone would agree--whether of any significant bearing on the matter of the Kennedy assassination, we don't know. These two episodes are testimony that the assassination of Castro was plotted in the White House and testimony that a threat by Oswald was disregarded by the FBI.

I should like to begin by asking Mr. Belin whether, if it should be established that Oswald was an agent of Castro, the Warren Report would be discredited.

MR. BELIN: I don't think the Warren Commission Report would be discredited to the extent that it said that Lee Harvey Oswald was the assassin and the sole assassin of President Kennedy and was the man that murdered Dallas police officer J. D. Tippit also on November 22nd. I don't believe that the Warren Commission Report would be discredited if it were to be proved that Oswald was affiliated with Castro, and I don't expect that evidence to arise 12 years after the event. The Warren Commission stated that there was no credible evidence of any foreign conspiracy or domestic conspiracy that had come to the attention of the commission.

MR. BUCKLEY: Which is different from saying that it didn't exist, right?

MR. BELIN: That's right. They never said that it didn't exist. What they did say was that the commission had found none. And unfortunately the commission was not advised of the fact that the CIA had been involved with assassination plots.

MR. BUCKLEY: Well, did you find none because you didn't look or because such as there was was concealed from you?

MR. BELIN: The latter. There were questions asked by the two lawyers with the Warren Commission who were concentrating in the area of possible foreign conspiracy. And of course John McCone and Richard Helms both testified before the Warren Commission, but they did not tell the Warren Commission about these plots. Allen Dulles was a member of the Warren Commission and did not tell his fellow commissioners about the fact the CIA had been involved with assassination plans directed against Castro.

MR. BUCKLEY: Well, not long ago you wrote, "There was never any question in my mind that the seven commissioners, as well as all the lawyers working with the commission, had absolute integrity in seeking the truth." Do you still believe that?

MR. BELIN: I still believe that, except I think it's limited to the question as to whether or not Oswald or any other person killed the president. I think there was absolute integrity to determine who was the gunman. I think there was also integrity so far as determining whether there was any foreign conspiracy. And I don't believe that Allen Dulles believed there was any foreign conspiracy, even though he withheld from his fellow commissioners the fact that the CIA had been involved in assassination plots--

MR. BUCKLEY: What grounds do you have for arriving at that conclusion, or is that just a hunch?

MR. BELIN: That's just a hunch.

MR. BUCKLEY: Well--

MR. BELIN: The fact that Allen Dulles didn't believe there was a conspiracy.

MR. BUCKLEY: Well, suppose he had believed that there was a conspiracy. Could you, from what you know of Allen Dulles, conceive of him as withholding that evidence in the interest of international comity?

MR. BELIN: I think there is little that is not conceivable in this day and age, and I would have to say that that is a possibility, although I think that if he really, sincerely believed there was a conspiracy, the greater probability is that he would have mentioned it to at least some of his commissioners, and I'm sure he would have mentioned it to the president.

MR. BUCKLEY: Well, suppose you were back 12 years ago working on the report--which you have defended so categorically in this book and which you continue to defend--and you knew at the time that the White House had in fact, however indirectly, commissioned the assassination of Castro. What would you then have done with that piece of intelligence that might have altered the findings of the Warren Commission?

MR. BELIN: The Warren Commission Report basically includes as part of its investigation the fact that there were rumors of the possibility of this being a reaction by Castro because of the actions of the Kennedy Administration against the Castro government and particularly the Bay of Pigs. I don't know how much broader our Warren Commission investigation would have been if we had had this additional information. I do believe it was important information to have, and it should not have been withheld from the Warren Commission. I don't know of any facts today that would show or prove that this was in any way a retaliation by Fidel Castro because of CIA plots directed against him. I happen to believe, by the way--and this belief is based upon my position as executive director of the Rockefeller Commission investigating the CIA--that Castro, or Castro agents, had infiltrated part of the CIA plans directed against the assassination of Castro.

MR. BUCKLEY: In order to abort the plan?

MR. BELIN: Perhaps in order to abort the plan, but at least I believe he had part of those plans, which in the latter stages included the use of Cuban dissidents. Part of those plans, I believe, were penetrated by Castro and CIA people involved in this era have so told me.

MR. BUCKLEY: Well, if Mr. Dulles on the one hand knowing that the death of Castro had become an objective of executive policy justified, I take it, on the assumption that we were de facto at war with Castro, who had imported missiles which had a range over a substantial part of American territory--Would he be justified or was he justified in withholding that datum 12 months later from you--

MR. BELIN: I don't believe so.

MR. BUCKLEY: --if he was personally convinced that no investigation that you could perform would exceed in thoroughness any that he had conducted showing that there was no relationship between that decision on the one hand and the assassination of Kennedy on the other?

MR. BELIN: I believe he had an obligation to disclose it to the Warren Commission.

MR. BUCKLEY: So he did not live up to his oath of office?

MR. BELIN: I believe that's accurate.

MR. BUCKLEY: Now, if he were alive and here today, what would you fancy his defense to have been? That so long as it was irrelevant it was an insubstantial datum to withhold?

MR. BELIN: I think basically his defense would be that even if we had known it, it would not have affected our conclusions; that there was no connection between the two; and that it was more important for national security not to disclose the fact that the CIA was involved in this kind of activity--which I as a citizen frankly don't believe that the CIA should have been involved in.

MR. BUCKLEY: So all we would have is a hypothetical motive of a particular character. Presumably-- After all, Castro greeted with some public elation the assassination of Kennedy. And all of his radio stations and so on were pumping out violent anti-Kennedy propaganda right up until the moment of his assassination.

MR. BELIN: As a matter--

MR. BUCKLEY: Under the circumstances, we knew that the hostility was there--

MR. BELIN: The hostility was--

MR. BUCKLEY: --but the general hostility isn't all that often transformed into a particularized hostility in which people are actually hired to bump other people off, right?

MR. BELIN: That's right. Castro supposedly in 1975 was interviewed by Senator McGovern and also by Frank Mankiewicz. And both Senator McGovern and Frank Mankiewicz say that they believe Castro because he was very sincere in his conversation with them, that he certainly had nothing to do with the assassination of President Kennedy and he had nothing to gain from it because supposedly Lyndon Johnson would have been a tougher person to negotiate with. I in no way want to say that Castro was in any way involved with the assassination of President Kennedy, but it is curious to me that with all of the current furor about possible conspiracies the most obvious one is cast aside on the guise that Castro was sincere when he said he wasn't involved.

MR. BUCKLEY: Well, if you were charged now with investigating a possible relationship between the two data, what would you do? Or if in 1963 you had known-- You couldn't very well call up Castro and ask him. Did you in fact neglect investigations that you would not have neglected if you had had that information?

MR. BELIN: The Warren Commission was broken up into areas. I happened to be one of the two lawyers in the area involved in who actually killed President Kennedy and who killed Officer Tippit. There were two lawyers involved in the question of whether there was any foreign conspiracy, and one of the possibilities they investigated was a possibility of a Castro conspiracy. They found no evidence of such. I don't know if they could have found any additional evidence beyond what was discovered at the time because of the fact that the CIA was used as an aide to try to develop what happened with regard to Oswald's trip to Mexico, for instance, approximately eight weeks before the assassination. I do know that there were substantial portions of Oswald's time that were unaccounted for and that I myself in my book raised one question that very much concerned me--this goes back to 1973 when I wrote my book--and that's the fact that when Oswald was apprehended, he had a pattern of lying in his interrogation. He lied about important things, and he didn't lie about unimportant things. He lied about the fact as to whether or not he owned a rifle. We knew that he owned a rifle. I took the testimony of the man that mailed the rifle to him; Klein's Sporting Goods sent the rifle by mail to Oswald. Oswald lied about whether or not he had brought a long paper bag into the building the morning of the assassination containing what he thought was curtain rods. And among the things Oswald lied about was a trip to Mexico that he took eight weeks before the assassination. And the question

that I raised in my book is: If it was unimportant, why did he lie about it? Perhaps that would have created a different kind of analysis on the part of the two lawyers investigating possible foreign conspiracy.

MR. BUCKLEY: You mean cause them to redouble their efforts or whatever?

MR. BELIN: Perhaps. I don't believe that they would have found any such evidence, but perhaps they would have. I don't think that they would have, though.

MR. BUCKLEY: But whatever they found there, it would not alter the fact that this man killed Kennedy and--

MR. BELIN: This man--

MR. BUCKLEY: --that there was nobody else on the scene firing on that afternoon?

MR. BELIN: This man and this man alone killed both President Kennedy and Officer Tippit. And I am constantly amazed at the coverup of the truth by people that have basically been misleading the American public into believing otherwise. You take the murder of Officer Tippit. When Oswald was apprehended in the Texas Theater--and he was apprehended because a man became suspicious of his actions in the vicinity where Officer Tippit was shot; he heard police sirens coming down the street; he saw Oswald duck into a shoe store; the police sirens ebbed away and then Oswald left. He trailed Oswald to the Texas Theater. When Oswald was approached by police he pulled out a pistol--hardly the act of an innocent man. And it turned out scientifically this pistol, to the exclusion of all other weapons in the world, was the Tippit murder weapon. And in addition you have six eyewitnesses that saw Oswald at or running away from the Tippit murder scene with gun in hand that conclusively identified him as the gunman. And so here you have a man apprehended with the murder weapon, six eyewitnesses, and yet people don't believe that he shot Tippit, because they have been misled by a lot of people that have been irresponsibly covering up the overall massive record from the American people.

MR. BUCKLEY: To say nothing of the fact that the same man, using the same handwriting, had ordered the weapon that killed Kennedy.

MR. BELIN: He ordered the weapon that killed Kennedy, which was mailed to the same post office box in Dallas, under the same alias that that pistol was mailed to. Oswald, of course, denied that he ever owned a rifle. Oswald also denied in his interrogation that the pistol was purchased by the mail. And the reason he denied it, of course, is the fact that it was mailed to the same post office box that the rifle was mailed to. But when you come to the Kennedy assassination, and people don't know this-- At the time of the assassination of President Kennedy, at 12:30 pm, on November 22, 1963, the only place that people saw a rifle was on the sixth floor, the southeast corner window, of the Texas School Book Depository building. And when you go inside that building and inspect that floor by that window, you find three cartridge cases in the southeast corner. By the northwest corner by the back stairway of this same floor, you find a rifle. Those cartridge cases came from that rifle to the exclusion of all other weapons in the world. When you examine the presidential limousine you find two ballistically identifiable bullet fragments which came from the bullet which shattered President Kennedy's head. Those bullets came from Oswald's rifle to the exclusion of all other weapons in the world. When you go to Parkland Hospital you find a nearly whole bullet that rolled off Governor Connally's stretcher. That bullet came from Oswald's rifle to the exclusion of all other weapons in the world. The fibers on President Kennedy's clothing pointed inward on the back, outward on the front, indicating a bullet went through from behind. Governor Connally's physicians all agree he was shot from behind. There have been 15 independent physicians that have examined the Kennedy autopsy photographs and x-rays and in contrast to this massive confusion where people alleged shots from the right front or front, every single one of these doctors agrees that there is no medical evidence that President Kennedy was shot from any direction other than the rear. And you go on and on and on.

MR. BUCKLEY: What about Dr. Wecht?

MR. BELIN: Dr. Wecht agrees that there is no medical evidence that any shots came from any direction other than the rear. Now, Dr. Wecht thinks that that happened to be two gunmen firing from the rear. But the problem with that analysis, among others, is the fact that the only bullets found came from Oswald's rifle. And it happens that probably the first person to think that there was more than one gunman, that served with the Warren Commission, was a country lawyer from Des Moines, Iowa, by the name of David Belin. And David Belin happened to feel, at first blush when he went to serve with the Warren Commission, that there probably was a conspiracy because Jack Ruby killed Oswald and you would think that he probably killed Oswald in order to silence him. And I came up with a unique theory because of the fact the FBI said you couldn't tell when Governor Connally was hit. With the Zapruder film, which was an amateur moving picture film taken at the time of the assassination, we could see the fatal shot striking President Kennedy which was at a frame which we number as frame 313. You could see the results of the first shot striking President Kennedy because he emerges from the freeway sign with his hand clutched to his throat at a frame which we number 225. But you could not determine exactly when Governor Connally was struck, even though we had 35 mm slides made of each single frame. Well, we had the Zapruder camera; it ran 18.3 frames a second. We knew the gun could not be aimed and fired accurately, according to FBI tests, faster than two or two and a quarter seconds, a minimum of about 40 frames. So I reasoned that if I could prove that Governor Connally was hit closer than 40 frames to President Kennedy I could prove there was a second gunman involved. And what I decided to do--and this was in January of 1964--was to contact Governor Connally's physicians--he had one physician who treated his back wounds, one his wrist wound, and one the superficial leg wound, all caused by one bullet they agreed-- And I asked them to reconstruct the position that Governor Connally was in at the time he was hit. And my thesis was that if I could show how Governor Connally had to be sitting in order to get the wounds that he suffered, then perhaps I could prove where he would have to be in the Zapruder film or could not be at the time he was hit. The physicians of Governor Connally did this. The only thing wrong is that Secret Service sent me back some reconstructed poses--in three of them the bullet entered the back of the wrist and came out the front and the other two it was vice versa. I called this discrepancy to the attention of Secret Service and Governor Connally's physicians; they all finally agreed that the bullet entered the back of his wrist. I then went back with the reconstructed poses to the FBI and lo and behold where President Kennedy was hit at around frame 220 to 225, Governor Connally could not have been hit after frame 240. And the camera angle--

MR. BUCKLEY: So therefore it had to be the same bullet?

MR. BELIN: Well, no. Not quite. Therefore a maximum--

MR. BUCKLEY: Or somebody firing at the same time?

MR. BELIN: --of one second elapsed between the time that Governor Connally was hit from the time President Kennedy was first hit. And my initial conclusion was that I had proved there was more than one gunman. The only possible thing wrong with my theory and my proof--because I knew that Governor Connally could not be hit more than a second after the President and it took at least two seconds to fire the gun-- The only possibility would be if the bullet that went through President Kennedy also went through Governor Connally. And I reluctantly eventually had to conclude that that's what happened. What we did in order to prove that: We took the Zapruder film on the slides and we reconstructed the motorcade, frame by frame, down Dealey Plaza. And from frame 220 to 225 it turns out that Governor Connally and President Kennedy were right on line. We then wanted to determine what happened to a bullet that would go through President Kennedy's neck, a rifle bullet.

MR. BUCKLEY: At 1900 feet per second.

MR. BELIN: We found it entered at about 1900 feet per second and exited at

about 1800 feet per second. At that speed it either had to damage severely the car or hit someone in the car. There was no severe damage to the car--

MR. BUCKLEY: To slow it down some more, yes.

MR. BELIN: --and basically we found that Governor Connally was right on line. And we eventually had to conclude there was no possible alternate conclusion. And by the way, there really is none. No other assassination critic has come up with any. I eventually had to conclude that my initial determination that there were two gunmen was wrong. There was really only one gunman. And that, of course, was reinforced by the fact that physically the only bullets found came from Oswald's rifle.

MR. BUCKLEY: Well, now, you were critical in your book of the rather casual acquiescence in this thesis by the commissioners out of a sort of gentlemanly deference to Connally who simply didn't want to have been hit by the same bullet that killed Kennedy because he was sure of an interval which you simply dismissed as typically one of those that people misrepresent for a number of reasons: A) There's a lot of tension and drama; and B) you don't necessarily react muscularly the moment you're hit. It is not uncommon to have a second or two or three go by before you know that you're hit. And he didn't even know that he was hit in his wrist until--

MR. BELIN: Right.

MR. BUCKLEY: --the next morning.

MR. BELIN: Well, you're very perceptive in your comment that Governor Connally never knew that he was hit in the wrist until he woke up in the hospital. But the Warren Commission wrote in its conclusions that although it is not necessary to any essential findings of the commission--

MR. BUCKLEY: But it is necessary, isn't it?

MR. BELIN: The Warren Commission was wrong in saying that it was not necessary.

MR. BUCKLEY: That will be tomorrow's headline.

MR. BELIN: Well--

MR. BUCKLEY: "Belin says" (laughter) "Warren Commission was wrong."

MR. BELIN: The Warren Commission was wrong in saying it was not necessary to determine just what shot hit Governor Connally. They went on to say there was much very persuasive evidence from the experts to indicate the same bullet which pierced the president's throat also caused Governor Connally's wounds. And based upon my initial determination, if that didn't happen you had to prove there was more than one gunman. I would candidly state that in my opinion the bullet that exited President Kennedy's throat at 1800 feet a second had to hit Governor Connally. He was right in line. It was a perfect line shot. And by the way, not a very difficult shot.

MR. BUCKLEY: Fifty-five yards.

MR. BELIN: About 55 to 60 yards, and a 4-power scope on that rifle brought it down to 15 yards. And the limousine was traveling at only 11.2 miles an hour. We were able to do that by analyzing the films. The fatal shot was less than 90 yards away, about 88 yards, a 4-power scope bringing it down to 22 yards. If anyone has ever fired a rifle--it wasn't a cross shot with the rifle having to go this way between the first and the second shot; it was a line shot. You just had to raise a rifle a few degrees out of that window to take the fatal shot.

I would also add one other thing. We've heard much about how the shots had to take place within six seconds. CBS in a recent documentary said, "Yes, they could take place in six seconds." Well, what people don't consider is what I believe to be the most likely alternative, and that's the fact the first shot struck President Kennedy, exited his throat and hit Governor Connally; the second shot, five and a half seconds later, struck President Kennedy in the head; and the third shot missed. Now, you could find witnesses that said the first shot missed; you could find witnesses that said the second shot missed; you could find witnesses that said the third shot missed. The most likely alternative is that the third shot did miss because it was the furthest shot and the limousine eventually started speeding up. But if you

assume that's what happened, then you have the two shots in five seconds, not three shots in five seconds.

You also have one other important factor, and it seems to me that this is crucial; it's also been ignored, by the way, by most of the people writing about this: That almost everyone at the scene of the assassination said that the shots either were evenly spaced or the second two shots were closer together than the first two shots. Now, if the shots were evenly spaced, you have a hit, and then five seconds later you have another sound and then four or five seconds later--depending upon whether the shots were closer together, evenly spaced--you have a third shot. But if Governor Connally was hit only a half a second or a second after the president, you would have a sequence of sounds along this line: (Belin knocks on table twice) and then five seconds later another sound (Belin knocks on table once more). And almost no one at the assassination scene remembers that sequence other than Governor Connally and his wife, who had to have that sequence in order to have their story hold. MR. BUCKLEY: Let me ask you this: Why, if these facts are as objectively persuasive as you say they are, do we have just this week alone the publication of two brand new books very extensively advertised--*They've Killed the President: The Search for the Murderers of John F. Kennedy* by Robert Anson and another one? Why is it that an account as unassailable as this continues to be assailed? Is it because of a desire to believe something else? Harrison Salisbury, in his introduction to your book, says that the American people feel that Lee Harvey Oswald didn't have the stature to bring down Camelot so they sort of hunger psychologically for a more dramatic explanation of it. Or is it just pure commercialism? Or what?

MR. BELIN: I am constantly amazed at how easy it is for a relatively small group of people to mislead the American people particularly when the press, if they wanted to get at this with one-tenth of the vigor with which they approached some other issues, could really expose what the truth is.

Let me give an example with Anson's book that you mentioned. I earlier talked about the fact that Oswald was trailed into the Texas Theater by Johnny Calvin Brewer. I'm going to mention my book because, as you know, I've donated all royalties to charity because I didn't want to profit from the assassination. But I set my book in a format of a jury trial. I give the heart of the testimony of the key witnesses and let the reader reach his own verdict as to who killed President Kennedy, who killed Officer Tippit. In the case of Brewer, I had the testimony of Brewer as to how it was that he trailed Oswald to the theater. And the theater lights were dark when he first tried to find Oswald--he didn't know it was Oswald at the time; it was a man that acted suspiciously. Eventually, when the house lights were turned on, he immediately spotted the person and pointed him out to the police. If you read Anson's book you will see when it comes to Brewer's testimony that he will say, "Well, Brewer could not see the man in the dark." And then a few pages later-- And by the way, Anson will cite as a footnote page 26 of my book, but he doesn't go on to say that at the bottom of page 26 Brewer went on to say that when the house lights were turned on he then immediately spotted the gunman and pointed him out to the police. Then what Anson does is a few pages later, he said, "Well, when the patrolman arrested Oswald, the patrolman said--according to a Dallas newspaper report--he didn't know who pointed him out; that there was some man in the front row of the theater. The theater had only about 15 or 20 people in it. There was some man in the front theater that pointed him out. And so Anson weaves a web of conspiracy saying that the man in the front row of the theater fingered Oswald and then mysteriously disappeared. And in the concluding chapter of his book, he intimates, you know, that this was part of the web of conspiracy. He doesn't tell you that when the police officer McDonald testified before the Warren Commission he was asked a question--which I happen also to have incorporated in my book at page 35--with the specific question being: "Did some person point out to you, though, this man sitting in the row whom you later arrested?" Anson: "Yes,

sir. He was a shoe store salesman. His name was Brewer. He was the one that met us at the rear exit door and said he saw this person run into the Texas Theater." Now, Anson's book has been commissioned by one of the major paperbacks, Bantam; it's been purchased by some of the leading newspapers in the country, including the *Washington Post*, for large excerpts. And why the *Washington Post*, why Bantam don't go and take a look at the footnotes, take a look at the record and say, "Anson is covering up the truth from the American people," I can't tell you, except I do know that Anson is doing it. MR. BUCKLEY: Maybe we could get Woodward and Bernstein to look at it. (laughter)

Well, what about some of your own experiences in trying to get public attention or documentaries made, the effect of which would be to revive public confidence in the Warren Report? Have you in fact done that? MR. BELIN: I have tried to do this. As a matter of fact, I had a personal experience which to me was very, very disconcerting. My book was published on the tenth anniversary of the assassination. I told my publisher since I was donating all royalties to charity, I did not want to make the circuit trip to promote the book. But I agreed to make a limited number of appearances, one of which was to be on the TODAY show on the tenth anniversary of the assassination. And a few days before that appearance, the TODAY show cancelled me and instead they substituted Liberace who had written an autobiography. Well, that was their province if they felt Liberace was the more important. The only thing wrong was that two years later, this past spring, the TODAY show had on as a guest a man by the name of O'Toole who had been commissioned by *Penthouse* magazine to write a book about the assassination. And *Penthouse*, by the way, I don't think covers up very much. (laughter) But in this particular case they had a man that covered up the truth. When it came to the murder of Officer Tippit--and I mentioned earlier the fact that witnesses saw the gunman toss cartridge cases in the bushes, Domingo Benavides, Barbara Jeanette Davis, and Virginia Davis turned those cartridge cases over to the police-- O'Toole has a machine called the "psychological stress evaluator." And he says with this machine you can look at a tape of a person's voice and tell whether or not that person is telling the truth. Well, I can assure you as the executive director of the Rockefeller Commission that if there is any agency in this country that wants to have a foolproof lie detector, it's the CIA (laughter) because the CIA can make sure they have no double agents. But, of course, what O'Toole has done is to take-- MR. BUCKLEY: It would mean an end to democratic government, though, wouldn't it? (laughter)

MR. BELIN: Perhaps an end to most marriages. (laughter) The thesis of O'Toole is that he takes a tape recording that Oswald made in Dallas shortly after the assassination when he was asked did he shoot the president and Oswald said, "I didn't shoot anyone." O'Toole listens to this and says, "Oswald was telling the truth. He didn't shoot anyone." But O'Toole is confronted with the fact of the Tippit murder. And when it comes to the cartridge cases, O'Toole says, "Well, they were so obviously found; they must have been planted there in an attempt to frame Oswald." Well, of course, he doesn't tell his readers in his book, nor did *Penthouse* magazine in the excerpts of that book, that Domingo Benavides, Barbara Jeanette Davis and Virginia Davis saw the gunman toss the cartridge cases, picked up the cartridge cases later and gave them to the police.

Well, after O'Toole was on the TODAY show, I wrote the people there and said, "You know, I really don't think that's quite fair to do this." And they told me something which really is of concern to me. They said, "There's no obligation on the part of the press, on the part of television media, to determine the truth." I'd always thought there was some degree of obligation. So I then went over to public television, and I said, "Look, there has been so much misconception about what happened. The key witnesses, almost all of them, are still living. While they are still living, let's go down to Dallas,

on the scene. We can get Brewer in his shoe store to show what happened. We can get Scoggins who saw the Tippit murder and saw Oswald head toward his cab as close as 12 feet and identified him. We can get all these people. We can get the witness to the assassination, Howard Brennan, who testified before us and who said he saw the gunman fire the last shot. Let's get him on video tape." And I said, "I will donate my time for free and go down with you." Well, I was advised that it was not deemed appropriate for public television to spend money, public funds, to bring these people before the American people because it would be deemed to be some kind of a confirmation of the Warren Commission which was a government commission, and this wasn't an appropriate way to spend government money. And I really am concerned about that as a citizen because there's so much distrust in government today--a lot of it legitimately so as an outgrowth of Vietnam and Watergate--it seems to me it's important for the American people when there is so much widespread concern about the Warren Commission investigation about the assassination of President Kennedy that we ought to take a little bit of time and uncover what the truth is. And unfortunately I've been able *not* to get this done.

MR. BUCKLEY: Mr. Robert Kuttner, formally a journalist, is now with the Senate Banking Committee. Mr. Kuttner.

MR. KUTTNER: Mr. Belin, if we assume that Oswald did indeed act alone on November 22, 1963, the question I think that's still even in your own mind a bit is whether he acted alone prior to November 22nd. What did the commission do to probe where Oswald was in Mexico to account for the time that was not accounted for? How extensive was that? What would you have done that was not done, knowing what you know now?

MR. BELIN: Well, first of all, there were two commission lawyers who concentrated on the Ruby area to see if Ruby was in any way conspiratorily involved. They were not able to find any evidence of such. And also, by the way, Ruby took a polygraph examination at his own insistence which confirmed the fact that he was not conspiratorily involved. There were two lawyers that analyzed Oswald's background and motive to see if there was any domestic conspiracy. They found none, no evidence of any. The two lawyers involved in foreign conspiracy had to make use of the CIA primarily with regard to Oswald's trip to Mexico. There were portions of Oswald's time that he spent there that could not be accounted for.

MR. BUCKLEY: He might have been seeing the pyramids, for all we know, right?

MR. BELIN: He could have. While I was involved as executive director of the Rockefeller Commission I turned over any matters pertaining to the Warren Commission investigation to one of my senior counsel because I had been involved as counsel to the Warren Commission. But I did get a report from someone who had been an assistant attorney general, who in turn incorporated a report that claimed that someone saw Oswald with CIA--pardon me; not with CIA--with Cuban agents, agents of Castro in Mexico. There were other reports that said that this was not accurate. All I can tell you is that at that particular time they could not find where Oswald spent all of his time. They were able to determine that he was at the Cuban Embassy and he was at the Russian Embassy, but as to where else he might have been they couldn't find. And I frankly don't think 12 years later that they're necessarily going to find very much else.

MR. KUTTNER: Okay. You think it's a bit far-fetched to speculate that if the CIA was involved in attempts to assassinate Castro that they might have had some motive to cover up something about what they might have known involving Oswald in Mexico City?

MR. BELIN: I don't think the CIA covered up anything so far as what they knew about any activities of Oswald. Bob Olsen, who was senior counsel to the Warren Commission, checked it out. I also checked it out myself. I believe that in no way whatsoever was the CIA involved with the assassination through Oswald and in no way whatsoever was there a coverup.

MR. BUCKLEY: But you don't know that?

MR. BELIN: I--

MR. BUCKLEY: You didn't know that the FBI had destroyed a document in which Oswald figured?

MR. BELIN: I did not know that the FBI destroyed a document that Oswald threatened the FBI several days before the assassination.

MR. BUCKLEY: Which, by the way, is not the kind of thing an assassin on a foreign duty would do, is it?

MR. BELIN: No. And it's not something that a person involved in a conspiracy would do. There's a lot of evidence that would point to no conspiracy. I think the failure of the FBI to disclose this to the Warren Commission was reprehensible. I think the fact that the CIA didn't disclose the assassination plots directed against Castro was reprehensible. But it in no way detracts from the fact that Oswald was the gunman. And, as I say, I know of no credible evidence to show that there was a conspiracy, although I have always been concerned about the trip to Mexico for the reasons I discussed earlier.

MR. KUTTNER: Thank you.

MR. BUCKLEY: Miss Martha Angle is with the *Washington Star*. Miss Angle.

MS. ANGLE: Mr. Belin, do you think there is any purpose to be served by a new probe of the Kennedy assassination, a full-fledged, new investigation that would take into consideration these additional facts that have come out in recent months?

MR. BUCKLEY: Which you have called for, right?

MR. BELIN: I called for this on the 12th anniversary of the assassination basically for two primary reasons: Number one, I know that any new probe is going to determine, is going to find, that Oswald was the sole gunman who killed President Kennedy and Officer Tippit. And I think that this would make a major contribution to the restoration of credibility in government. In addition, I think it would be important for the American people to see how easily they have been misled by people who have deliberately exploited the media and have covered up the overall record, such as we've talked about earlier--the fact of Johnny Calvin Brewer. I think it would be a healthy thing for the American public to know how this has been done. I think it would be a healthy thing for the American media.

MR. BUCKLEY: How do you know that they would find out after-- Why would they accept that investigation if they didn't accept the other?

MS. ANGLE: Who can do such an investigation and have the credibility?

MR. BELIN: I called for Congress's doing it, and I'm sure that there will be a lot of people that won't accept the fact after Congress goes in and Congress finds that, yes, Oswald did kill President Kennedy and, yes, he did kill Officer Tippit. People will still say, "I don't believe it." And I can't say that a lot of people won't say that. But I think it would be helpful for the American press and the American media to have this gone into once again to see how the truth has been withheld from the American people.

MR. BUCKLEY: Would you conduct it in an adversary setting in any way? Would you invite the witnesses to be cross-examined by Mark Lane types or--

MR. BELIN: I would leave that up to Congress with--

MR. BUCKLEY: Would you recommend it?

MR. BELIN: I would recommend that Congress probably approach it in the form of an investigation rather than an adversary proceeding. But in the form of the investigation you're going to have to weigh all of the evidence including an intensive examination of all of the witnesses. I would let everyone--the Mark Lanes and the others--bring whatever evidence they want. And I think the more evidence they bring, the more it's going to disclose what the overall truth is.

MR. BUCKLEY: You attempted, did you not, to answer Mark Lane's invitation to submit some evidence before he produced his movie?

MR. BELIN: Well, Mark Lane wrote a book entitled *Rush to Judgment*. And by the way, as an example, in this book you'll never hear anything about Johnny Calvin Brewer who trailed Oswald to the Texas Theater. Instead you'll read

Professor Hugh Trevor Roper's introduction to the book saying there's no evidence at all to show why the Dallas police pounced on Oswald. But Mark Lane then decided that he made so much money on his book he wanted to make a moving picture, which he did. And he wrote an invitation to the lawyers and the members of the Warren Commission saying, "I hereby give you an opportunity to rebut this film on camera." And because all of us knew Mark Lane for what he was-- I figured everyone would throw his letter in the wastebasket and so then he would come out and say, "Well, all of the Warren Commission members and counsel turned me down." So I decided to accept his offer. I wrote him back nine successive letters trying to have 30 minutes on camera to rebut his film, because I said, "That's all it's going to take for me to destroy your film. And each time he turned me down. And finally-- He never replied to my letters, by the way. Finally, at the tenth letter he said, "Well, none of the other people accepted my offer and so I'm going to turn you down because we've decided not to settle for bit players." And to this day the film is still being shown on campuses across the country, and it doesn't contain the rebuttal that was originally offered to me and then covered up by Mr. Lane.

MR. BUCKLEY: Did I interrupt you, Miss Angle? I'm sorry if I did. Did you have another question?

MS. ANGLE: I had one other question--

MR. BUCKLEY: Yes.

MS. ANGLE: --that's slightly off this point.

You have, as you indicated, not absolutely and categorically ruled out the possibility of the foreign conspiracy theory with Oswald as the sole gunman. Was there serious concern within members of the Warren Commission about the domestic ramifications of finding a foreign conspiracy, about what it would do to this country in those months immediately after the assassination when passions were still running so high?

MR. BELIN: There might have been--

MS. ANGLE: Was there any holding back?

MR. BELIN: There might have been among some members of the Warren Commission. One member I can assure you who wasn't was President Ford. Representative Ford was on that commission, and if you examine the Warren Commission interrogations of John McCone and Richard Helms and see the questions that then Representative Ford asked, I think that he was trying to go forward on it. I can guarantee you that all of the lawyers, including me-- I had just one goal: to find the truth and let the chips fall where they may.

That's one of the great things about this country, by the way. I can't visualize very many countries in this world where an independent lawyer from Des Moines, Iowa, can come to serve on the Warren Commission or serve as executive director of a commission investigating the CIA and come forward with a report. Because there is nothing in this world that would make me sign a document that I didn't believe to be true, and there's nothing in this world that would stop me from saying something that I didn't believe to be true. And I can guarantee you that if I felt that there was some kind of a government conspiracy to try to cover up the truth because of possible ramifications, I would have blown the whistle and so would all of the other 13 lawyers or 14 lawyers serving with the commission. And that's one of the virtues of having outside people come to serve with independent commissions of this kind.

MS. ANGLE: Thank you.

MR. BUCKLEY: Mr. Frank Donatelli is executive director of Young Americans for Freedom. Mr. Donatelli.

MR. DONATELLI: Thank you. Mr. Belin, I'd like to ask you about the CBS documentary that was recently aired. In the second section there was an entire segment dealing with Oswald's connections with the CIA and the FBI or those that they could find. And they served up a few juicy tidbits: he had taken a trip to Mexico that couldn't be accounted for, and that he had been mysteriously discharged from the service early. At one point they interviewed someone who claimed Oswald and a Latin, as they described it, came to see him and

asked him certain questions. Is there anything in that report--the CBS report--or anything at all that has come to light in the past couple of years that gives you second thoughts about the conclusion that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone before November 22nd?

MR. BELIN: There is nothing that gives me second thoughts about the fact that Oswald was the sole gunman who killed President Kennedy and Officer Tippit. I wrote in my book the question about the trip to Mexico, and I asked: If Oswald lied about the fact that he owned a rifle, he lied about the fact that there was a picture of him taken with a rifle--we scientifically concluded that came from his camera to the exclusion of all other cameras in the world--why did he lie about the trip to Mexico? I can say this: As a trial lawyer, whenever you have more than two witnesses to an event, you're going to get more than two stories. And there were literally hundreds of witnesses involved in this event. People at the scene of the assassination, people that might have come in contact with Oswald. We found no credible evidence, when you followed everything down the road, that would prove the existence of a conspiracy. I cannot categorically state that Oswald never talked to anyone about the possibility of assassinating the president.

MR. BUCKLEY: But that's a matter of philosophical discipline.

MR. BELIN: That's right.

MR. BUCKLEY: Yes.

MR. BELIN: I told Congresswoman Bella Abzug a few weeks ago--when she said, "How do you know that the FBI didn't withhold anything else?"--"I can't prove the FBI didn't withhold anything else," I said to her, "anymore than I can prove that you've never been an FBI informant." You cannot prove things to a negative. I can tell you that all of the evidence points to the fact that Oswald acted alone. But this question on the trip to Mexico is something that still to a degree troubles me.

MR. DONATELLI: Then I would come back to Mr. Buckley's point: What real benefit is to be served by opening this whole thing up again? We've had a very exhaustive Warren Report. We've had two reports by CBS, for heaven's sake, and I'm sure they would have found something if they could have and the American people still don't believe the Warren Report. What in the world is to be served by Congress, of all people-- I mean, talk about having confidence in--

MR. BUCKLEY: Well, it might prove deflationary in this sense: There was a reopening of the Robert Kennedy assassination before which there was much more skepticism than there is now after that particular gun was discharged a couple of times. I don't think there is an analogue for that gun in the J.F.K. case, is there?

MR. BELIN: No--

MR. BUCKLEY: But if people like Anson and Mark Lane and so on were invited to submit questions to a competent congressional investigating body, which questions were in turn put to witnesses or which leads were in turn followed, it would at least establish, would it not, that nobody was afraid of reopening the investigation?

MR. BELIN: I think that's a very important thing. I think this: That in the Robert Kennedy assassination the question was whether or not there was another gun involved. When I served with the Warren Commission I criticized the fact that the commission yielded to the desires of the Kennedy family for privacy and did not publicize the horrible, gruesome autopsy photographs and x-rays. I earlier said tonight that 15 different physicians have examined those x-rays and have all concluded that there is no medical evidence of any shots coming from the rear. Now, all these assassination critics or almost all of them claim that there were shots coming from the front or right front. And many of you have seen the Zapruder film that shows the head of the president flying back, and as a layman you say, "My gosh! That must be evidence of shots coming from the front." Well, it isn't evidence of shots coming from the front. It's basically a neurological reaction as part of the brain is shot away and also a reaction known as the jet effect. I think that--

MR. BUCKLEY: Actually the CBS film was rather helpful there, wasn't it, in those ITEC--

MR. BELIN: The CBS film was helpful. I can say that if people today don't believe that Oswald killed Officer Tippit when he was apprehended with the murder weapon in hand and we have six eyewitnesses, I can guarantee you that a lot of people aren't going to believe Oswald killed President Kennedy even if Congress reopens the investigation. But as I said earlier, I think it would help establish credibility toward government to show that, yes, the Warren Commission which was a government commission did reach the truth. And I think it will be very helpful for this country to find out how easily the large majority of the people have been misled by exploitation of the media and by a coverup by Warren Commission critics of the overall record. Because what you have to show is not just a segment here and a segment there; you have to take a look at it as a whole. And I told my wife if I really wanted to make a lot of money what I would do was I would pull out from the record and construct a case--which by the way I think I could do better than anyone has done thus far--and prove that Oswald wasn't the gunman. Now, it would be a fraud because he was the gunman, but I think I could do a better job than the Ansons and the Lanes and the others.

MR. BUCKLEY: Simply by selective pastiche?

MR. BELIN: Yes, sir.

MR. BUCKLEY: Yes. Mr. Kuttner.

MR. KUTTNER: You don't think, though, that it's difficult to understand why there's so much skepticism? I mean, to talk about the media. You have a whole generation of reporters that has learned really one lesson, and that is that they lie to you, that the government lies to you.

MR. BUCKLEY: Yes, but the skepticism ante-dated that.

MR. BELIN: But why, if the reporters--

MR. KUTTNER: No--

MR. BUCKLEY: Mark Lane was running around in 1964 or '65. All those people-- Watergate was almost ten years later.

MR. KUTTNER: But I think it does explain why that has more credibility now even than it did then.

MR. BELIN: I agree with you. But why, if the *Washington Post* is going to run a major excerpt from this book, can't they take a look at--or you know, they could have called me or anyone else at the Warren Commission--and then say when Anson weaves his web of conspiracy about the fact that there was some unnamed person who fingered Oswald in the Texas Theater and he cites on the first point that Brewer couldn't identify Oswald in the dark--or the man he saw in the dark--but yet he doesn't say in his book later on the same page that he quotes from my book that when the house lights were turned on he was able to pick him out-- Why doesn't the *Washington Post* say Anson is a fraud? Why don't they go through with one-tenth of the degree of intensity that they used with Watergate to really expose what's going on? I think the *Washington Post* did a fantastic job on Watergate, a very, very important job. But I think that somewhere along the way, when the material is available, they ought to really go out and do the same kind of a job to these people so that *Penthouse* magazine and Bantam Books can't go around just literally destroying the credibility of the government before the people. Because right now the people think that it has been withheld from them who killed President Kennedy. It hasn't been withheld. What's happened is that probably the biggest coverup in recent years has taken place by a relatively small group of people. And the ramifications of it--and this is what I urge today--is that if a small group of people can cover up the truth and mislead the public about what happened with the Kennedy assassination, they can do it in other things which might be of long-range importance to this country.

MR. BUCKLEY: Of course it's not all that categoric, right? *Time* magazine had an extensive treatment, all of which agreed with your thesis. So did *The New York Times*--

MR. BELIN: That's right.
MR. BUCKLEY: --Sunday magazine. So it isn't as though there was an impermeable blanket--
MR. BELIN: I would agree.
MR. BUCKLEY: --covering up the facts, right?
MR. KUTTNER: It's a pretty good man-bites-dog story: government commission tells truth.
MR. BELIN: Yes, it's a story. And by the way, you won't find one paperback today which defends the Warren Commission findings. You'll have all kinds of paperbacks attacking it, but not one--
MR. KUTTNER: Is your book out in paperback?
MR. BELIN: My book is not out in paperback. The paperback people thus far have not thought it important to bring it out in paperback.
MR. BUCKLEY: Thank you very much, Mr. Belin. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen of the panel. And thank you, students of George Washington and of American University.